



Wildlife Gardening Forum Newsletter

February 2011

There has been rather a gap since the last newsletter, but we hope to produce several this year, provided you send plenty of news about your projects, events and findings to wlgf@stephenmhead.com.

As you know, the Forum is now a small charity, and has set up its own bank account, so payments for future conferences can be made easily through BACS. The next conference is on June 8th at the Natural History Museum, and we will be sending details out soon. If possible, we will have another conference/workshop in the autumn, which will also be our first AGM and a chance to discuss options for the Forum's future.

New Scientist reviews the human health benefits of green spaces

Writing in the 9th November edition of New Scientist, Nora Schultz, a freelance journalist based in Berlin described recent work showing the benefits of exposure to gardens and green space. This article is available on the New Scientist website if you have a subscription. One of the most worrying recent trends in western society is childhood obesity. Janice Bell of the University of Washington and colleagues have shown that children living in greener parts of the city averaged 6kg less than those in less green urban areas, regardless of either their family income, or of the presence of concreted play areas. Japanese research has shown that cortisol and blood pressure levels are reduced more by a walk in the country than in a pleasant part of a city, and another Japanese study showed similar benefit to the immune system.

A thorough Dutch study showed the incidence of 15 illnesses including depression and anxiety, asthma, heart disease, diabetes, bone and muscle pains, headaches, diabetes and respiratory infections was inversely related to the amount of green space within 1 km of the patient's home, some dropping by as much as 25% in greener areas. A British study looking at over 360,000 retired people found 5% less mortality from ill-health in people living in the greenest areas compared with the least green.. The effect also substantially reduced the health differential between the richest and poorest people in the greenest areas.

The evolutionary biologist Edward Wilson thinks that from our ancestry, our brains are hard-wired to process the natural landscape more efficiently than our recent urban environment, and some neurological studies back this up. This could be why people feel more at ease and less stressed in semi-natural environments.

Exposure to nature could have some very practical applications. American research has shown that a brief walk in the park helped the concentration of children with

ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder) about as much as their standard medication – but a walk in a pleasant area of town had no such effect.

Evidence is mounting that gardens and green space help people as well as wildlife. We want to start up the proposed Human Health and Wellbeing Working Group in the Forum, to collect evidence and influence national and local policy. If you would like to be involved with this group, please contact me at wlgf@stephenmhead.com.

Gardening For Life leaflets

Garden for Life is a partnership of organisations working in Scotland, with the same overall Aims as the Wildlife Gardening Forum. Catriona Morrison brought some leaflets to the last conference, but didn't have enough for everyone.



There are 7 excellent leaflets:

- Garden for Life
- Garden for butterflies
- Garden for birds
- Garden for life in pots and containers
- Garden for food
- Garden without peat
- Garden for Orchards

You can download them as pdf files from www.gardenforlife.org.uk or Catriona can supply hard copy if you contact her at Catriona.Morrison@snh.gov.uk.

Wildlife Trusts Living Landscapes Agenda.

Roz Wisniewski of the Essex Wildlife Trust has drawn our attention to this project, which has considerable relevance for the Forum, and marks a material shift in focus from reserve-based towards landscape level conservation. The summary below is adapted from the project's website at www.wildlifetrusts.org/?section=environment:livinglandscapes

Paul Wilkinson, The Wildlife Trusts' Head of A Living Landscape says:

"This is the future of conservation. With the onset of climate change, wildlife and society face their biggest challenge yet. We have spent 100 years safeguarding wildlife havens. Now we must expand on these and create 'A Living Landscape' where our nature reserves are integral parts of wider functioning landscapes and not isolated oases".

The ambitious vision is of a country where:

- Wildlife is abundant and flourishing, both in the countryside and our towns and cities
- Whole landscapes and ecosystems have been restored
- Wildlife is able to move freely through these landscapes and adapt to the effects of climate change;

- Communities are benefiting fully from the fundamental services that healthy ecosystems provide
- Everyone has access to wildlife-rich green spaces and can enjoy and be inspired by the natural world.

All this strikes home strongly with the Forum's agenda and points the role gardens can have as part of the wider landscape and as stepping stones and corridors, helping the spread of species under climate change adaptation.

The Wildlife Trusts are already at work to create the transformation to A Living Landscape. Over 100 Living Landscape schemes are underway across the whole of the UK, covering an area of over 1.5m hectares. Each scheme covers a large area of land: a naturally functioning landscape (such as a river catchment) encompassing several Wildlife Trust reserves and other important wildlife areas. Individual Wildlife Trusts work with partners, landowners and local communities to restore the natural landscape.

Woking Garden Wildlife Watch 2010 *Gill Stribley writes*

It was good to increase the participation in our fourth Annual Garden Wildlife Watch survey to 405, 47% higher than the 275 respondents in 2009.

The recordings of the bird species have generally shown good consistency from year to year. Where this has not been the case a significant change was demonstrated in decline of the house sparrow and starling and also the crow, while there has been an increase in the coal tit, long-tailed tit and ring-necked parakeet. These findings are in agreement with the RSPB and BTO surveys so it shows our sample sizes are adequate to pick up such trends at a local level.

The percentage presence for the named animal species or groups over the year prior to the annual survey also showed very consistent results over the four years 2007-10. However, the stag beetle in 2010 as in 2009, showed significant reduction from 49% in 2007 to 40%, similar to the level it was in 1999. As in 2008, hedgehogs in 2010 were seen in only 24% of gardens, which is significantly lower than the 33% reported in the 1999 survey.

The results of the environmentally friendly practices questionnaire showed some general trends over the four surveys of 1999, 2007, 2008, and 2010. It was possible to demonstrate major changes in garden practices in 2007 compared to 1999. The use of chemical weed killers, pesticides, slug pellets and inorganic soil improvers continues to be less than in 1999 but there has been some fluctuation, so people still need to be fully aware of what impact their actions can have on the environment. On the other hand providing water and food for birds, composting and collecting rainwater have remained at high levels of participation since 2007.

For further details see the Full Assessment Report and an abridged report at <http://sites.google.com/site/wokingla21/Home/gardening-for-life>

Gill Stribley gill@stribley.demon.co.uk

[The Woking LA21 project is gathering very interesting statistics and trends from its volunteer recorders. The Forum would very much like to hear from any other groups conducting similar repeated garden surveys anywhere in the UK.

If (like me) you can't print from the Google sites address above, I have a pdf version of the report, so contact me if you want a copy) at wlgf@stephenmhead.com]

Save our peatlands - the UK's rainforests¹!

The RSPB is coordinating a campaign with partner charities to reduce damage to peat habitats, while raising funds for conservation, and here is their campaign text.

Peatland is one of our most precious and endangered resources, yet intensive agriculture, drainage and peat extraction continue to take their toll. Today only 1% of pristine lowland peat bog remains intact. Peatlands provide habitats for rare bird and insect species including snipe, curlews, large heath butterflies and dragonflies, as well as plants such as carnivorous sundews and butterworts.

Peat extraction to produce compost has contributed to the destruction of 94% of lowland raised bog, a rare and slow-forming habitat, in the UK. We currently use some three billion litres of peat every year in our gardens. Yet garden trials commissioned by the consumer group *Which?* in March 2010 showed that peat-free composts outperformed the best peat-based counterparts.

Going peat-free would also help us tackle waste and landfill, as peat-free compost is predominantly made up of by-product materials from other industries, such as wood waste and green compost. The upcoming budget provides an excellent opportunity to help UK gardeners go peat-free by giving consumers and industry real incentives to switch to peat alternatives by introducing a levy onto the sale of peat-based composts. Amateur gardening accounts for 69% of peat compost used in the UK. A levy on peat compost would increase its price and encourage consumers to switch to the more effective peat-free alternatives, which would remain the same price. This would help create a market where business no longer needs to extract peat from lowland bogs, and could instead focus on investing in alternatives. This in turn would boost UK recycling, and make better use of our waste. The money raised by the levy would be used to support conservation, in the same way as the Landfill and Aggregate taxes.



*The RSPB's Campfield
Marsh reserve in Cumbria
Photo by Andy Hay*

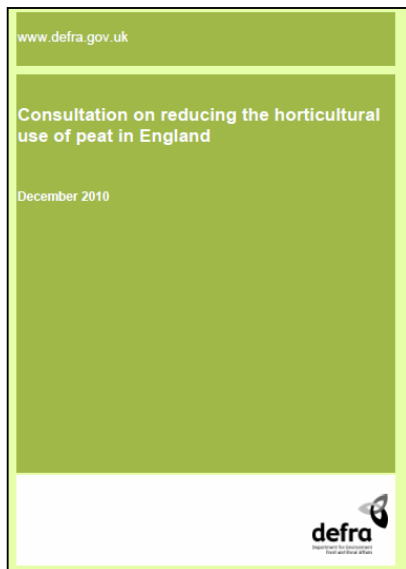
Help make sure that peat use in compost is phased out completely by writing to your MP and asking them to contact the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Justine Greening, to call for a levy on peat-based composts to be introduced in the budget on 23 March. Please also ask your MP to send a copy of their letter to Richard Benyon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs.

Find out more about this campaign at
www.rspb.org.uk/supporting/campaigns/campaignwithus/current/peat.aspx

¹ Errr? – Perhaps a touch of hyperbole here? [Ed.]

Meanwhile, the government has issued a consultation paper on the use of horticultural peat ending (very soon) on 11th March, which you can find at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/peat/index.htm

The well written consultation notes that the UK's peat deposits contain 5bn tonnes equivalent to more than half of the carbon stored in all of the trees in Europe's forests (excluding Russia). Intact raised bogs are one of Europe's rarest and most threatened habitats, and in England, just 1% of the original pristine habitat is left – around 700 hectares. Recent peat extraction for horticulture and gardening has affected some 16% of raised bog peatlands and at least a further 5% has been affected by older peat extraction activities. Although a natural product, peat is in practice a non-renewable resource as it forms extremely slowly, at around 1mm a year. This means that, in order to harvest peat sustainably, only around 10 to 20 cubic metres of peat could be removed annually per hectare of peat-forming raised bog. At this rate, active English lowland raised bogs could sustainably supply less than 2% of the 3 million cubic metres of peat we currently use each year for horticulture.



Peat only became the dominant material for horticulture and gardening in the 1970s as a replacement for loam (soil) based growing media formulations. Good quality loam was becoming very difficult to source in sufficient quantities to respond to the growing interest in amateur gardening, and heavy loam mixes meant that transport and handling were expensive. Today, 69% of peat is used by amateurs, 30% by professional horticulturalists, and about 1% by local government.

There has been progress in reducing the horticultural use of peat over the last decade, and data for sales during 2009 shows that the market is now 57.5% peat free, against a background of

30% overall market growth over the same period. Significantly, Which? Gardening recognised the improvement in non-peat based composts by awarding “Best Buy” awards to three peat-free container composts for the first time in March 2010. However, recent surveys indicate that only 8% of keen gardeners are aware that peat extraction is contributing to climate change, and only 12% are aware of the harm it can cause to biodiversity and wildlife, so education is clearly an important element of any attempts to reduce peat extraction.

The consultation asks 15 questions. The most significant for the Forum could be::

Question 1: Do you support the rationale for taking action to reduce the horticultural use of peat?

Question 4: Do you agree that the horticultural use of peat can and should be phased out in all markets and for all plant species and growing media products? Based on evidence where possible, should there be any exceptions to this?

Question 6: Do you think that there is more that Government and the public sectors should be doing to support and enable the switch to peat-free growing media? If so, what would be the priorities?

- Question 8: Do you agree (based on evidence where possible) that the use of peat in the amateur market can and should be phased out by 2020, and that the proposed interim milestones are sufficiently ambitious and achievable?
- Question 9: Do you think that more needs to be done to build consumer awareness, improve labelling at point of sale or improve and standardise the quality of growing media products? If so, what would be your top priorities?
- Question 12: Do you agree that the use of peat in the professional grower market can and should be phased out by 2030 at the very latest? Based on evidence where possible, do you think it is feasible to phase out peat from this market earlier than 2030?

The Forum would like to contribute to the consultation in support of a phased reduction of peat use in horticulture, and urges its membership to contribute their own views – but quickly to beat the deadline of 11th March.

Avaaz campaign to ban neonicotinoid pesticides

Avaaz is a 6.5-million-person global campaign network that works to ensure that the views and values of the world's people shape global decision-making. Following human rights, anti-GMO and climate change campaigns, Avaaz has joined the international expression of concern about declining bee populations, by campaigning against one important class of pesticides.

Neonicotinoids such as Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxam act like as nerve poisons like nicotine, but target insect physiology and so are of lower toxicity to other animals. They are extensively used especially against aphids and other sucking pests. They have long been linked to declines in honey bees and Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), and a review by Vicky Kindemba of Forum Member Buglife in 2009 (see www.buglife.org.uk/Resources/Buglife/Documents/PDF/REVISED_Buglife_Neonicotinoid_Report.pdf) concluded that EU pesticide testing procedures have not been adequate to assess sub-toxic effects on honey bees and other non-pest species.;

Avaaz campaign states:

“Quietly, globally, billions of bees are dying, threatening our crops and food. But a global ban of one group of pesticides could save bees from extinction.

Four European countries have begun banning these poisons, and some bee populations are recovering. But chemical companies are lobbying hard to keep all killer pesticides on the market. A global outcry now for a ban in the US and EU, where debate is raging, could provoke a total ban and a ripple effect around the world. Let’s build a giant global buzz calling for these dangerous chemicals to be outlawed in the US and EU until and unless they are proved to be safe. Sign the petition to save bees and our crops and send this to everyone”

To sign up to Alvaaz’ campaign go to www.avaaz.org/en/save_the_bees/?fpbr

Unusually, the Forum Member the Bumblebee Conservation Trust has written a careful rider to the Alvaaz campaign, urging people to be aware that while

neonicotinoids may well be damaging they are not the whole picture of bee decline. Here are their summary comments based on the full Avaaz campaign literature:



“BBCT share concerns about growing evidence suggesting that some pesticides, including neonicotinoids, are harmful to bees.

However, there are some statements in the Avaaz summary which, based on BBCT's understanding of the scientific evidence, are not well supported. This weakens their position and threatens to make hard-won signatures less valuable. Furthermore, they make a strong case for pesticides being the root cause of global bee declines. In some instances pesticides may be seriously affecting honeybees, but it is BBCT's view that many of our wild bee species have declined primarily due to habitat loss and other factors, besides pesticide use. With honeybees the situation is also more complicated than the Avaaz literature implies. Disease has a significant role in ongoing declines.

BBCT value the efforts of Avaaz in raising awareness of important issues and galvanising mass support and peaceful protest. However, in this instance the arguments are oversimplified and at times incorrect. Calling for a ban on neonicotinoids as a precaution until thorough independent research confirms their safety seems prudent and has our support. However, the campaign materials risk polarising a complex issue and undermining efforts to tackle global bee declines from all necessary angles.”

To see the detailed reasoning behind BBCT's reservations go to www.bumblebeeconservation.org.uk/avaaz.html

Forum members concerned about bees may also be interested in a paper published in October 2010 by a large team of scientists at the University of Montana. You can access the paper at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20949138

In the past scientists studying CCD have found various bee viruses and the parasite, *Nosema* in both healthy and collapsing colonies, but could not link the disease to any single agent. The Montana team used modern proteomic techniques to analyse proteins from many samples and identified an invertebrate iridescent virus (IIV) associated with CCD colonies. The prevalence of IIV in a colony was a good discriminator between strong, failing, and collapsed colonies. In addition, bees in *failing* colonies contained not only IIV, but also *Nosema*. When found together, these pathogens consistently marked CCD in bees from commercial US apiaries and bees repeatedly sampled as their colony decline, and bees from a recurrence of CCD in Florida in 2009. The co-occurrence was not found in samples from Australia with no history of CCD. Experimental trials in the lab confirmed that co-infection with these two pathogens was more lethal to bees than either pathogen alone.

This study is strong evidence that CCD has a basis in disease, but of course other factors such as pesticides may weaken colonies and predispose them to dual infection. However, it does suggest a profitable course of research to understand how to prevent and hopefully cure colony decline.

King's Cross Community Projects Green Wall



Sophie Talbot of King's Cross Community Projects has joined the Forum and is asking for help in their first project, to create a green wall at Wharfdale Road London N1 9UA. As their website says:

“Isn't this ugly expanse of wall just crying out for lush, green plants? With a bit of imagination and enthusiasm our local community could transform it into a beautiful vertical urban green space. Wouldn't it be great to plant our vertical garden in a fantastic sculptural planter reflecting the rich history of our area. And in all this, let's create new homes for our urban wildlife – blackbirds, starlings, sparrows, robins, green and gold finches, bats and bugs could move in and live rent free.”

The team have got funding from the Borough of Islington's Section 106 pot, money given by developers to improve local infrastructure. The great idea is to create a piece of community art which is also a living vertical habitat to encourage suitable wildlife.

Sophie is looking for advice on planting for wildlife to ensure they get it right. Are there any Forum members based in London who could give the project a helping hand? You can find out more at www.cookie.org.uk/greenwall, or contact Sophie at sophie@cookie.org.uk

Update from the North Wales Wildlife Gardening project 2010

From Anna Williams, Project Leader

GARDDIO BYWYD GWYLLT
GOGLEDD CYMRU



WILDLIFE GARDENING
NORTH WALES

People's Million – North East Wales

The Snowdonia Wildlife Gardening project became the North Wales Wildlife Gardening project in 2010 when we won the Big Lottery's People's Millions vote and funding. This meant we could employ Iwan Edwards who has been busy helping schools and community groups create wildlife and allotment gardens in NE Wales. He is based with the North Wales Wildlife Trust in Loggerheads and has mainly been working on projects in socially deprived areas, reaching and engaging many people who would never otherwise had a chance to enjoy gardening. He wants to carry on giving his volunteers professional training so that they might be able to see a real change in their lives. His funding is only for a year and we hope to receive further funding for his valuable work for the next 3 year period.

In order to inspire other gardening projects to go for People's Millions funding, Iwan and I were invited to represent Wales at the launch of the Jubilee People's Millions outside Buckingham Palace on a cold and sunny December day. It was good to meet

other winning gardening projects from all corners of the country and it's definitely worth applying if you need money for a community or school project.

Education – Healthy Growing / “Tyfu’n Iach” in North West Wales

2010 was a busy year for the education part of our project and we were pleased to get a contract to provide hands-on teacher training days for 40 schools in Conwy from their Healthy Schools department. Over 63 teachers and support staff attended 3 days when we did everything from planning a wildlife or vegetable garden to sowing seeds, potting up and hands-on woodwork putting together raised beds, bird and bat boxes. The teachers enjoyed it as much as the children usually do - hands got dirty and we had many laughs playing a few games as well.



Year 6 boys planting out leeks in Ysgol Waunfawr. The children in this school have taken a liking to both leek & potato and pumpkin soup. Rhubarb crumble, fresh strawberries or raspberries are also popular.

During the autumn we have visited all the schools giving individual advice including help with filling in grant forms. As a culmination of

this programme, we are organising 3 celebratory days in March with Conwy Council where children will come with their teachers and share experiences and exchange ideas. All schools that have taken part have agreed to start a gardening club and they now want ideas for activities and how to make best use of the garden. An excellent project and I hope many other local authorities will be inspired to copy Conwy.

I really believe there is a huge gap in gardening knowledge amongst teachers as we see a positive trend of more schools starting gardening projects. We could be working full-time helping schools realise their dreams, but as always it will depend on further funding for our project. At the moment I am waiting to hear from grant providers for funding for the next financial year, fingers crossed. We haven't charged schools yet for our services but this might become a necessity in the future.



Wildlife Garden Award Scheme Competition

During the spring and summer we ran our annual Wildlife Garden Competition/ Award scheme in North West Wales, a huge area covering Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy. We have 4 main categories with 2

Gold winning small wildlife friendly garden in Rachub, Bethesda

subcategories; private (small and large), schools (primary and others), business and community gardens. This year we had more entrants than ever; 56 gardens in total, although the number of people involved was well over a hundred as many are schools (20) and community groups (5). We visit all the gardens and give individual feedback if required. The schools and community groups are especially excited and will proudly display any awards received (gold, silver, bronze or highly commended). Previous winners Jenny and Brian Osborne from Fox Brush, Port Dinorwic as well as Sonia Davies from Llandudno have given their valuable time to help with the judging.

Wildlife Garden Open Day Project

We embarked on a new project this year which was a natural development from running the wildlife garden competition for 7 years. With money from Environment Wales, Anna Budesha has been busy developing the volunteer / community work in NW Wales. She organised 10 Open Days in inspiring gardens with inspiring owners (including community groups) helping to spread the message to garden with wildlife in mind.

To make it a fun day for the whole family, Anna kept the children busy making bird boxes or insect homes, following nature trails or bug hunts or quietly doing some crafts. The programme for 2011 is soon ready for distribution and please contact Anna B if you want a copy at annabudesha@wildlifetrustswales.org. If you want to contact me for any other enquiry my e-mail is annawilliams@wildlifetrustswales.org.

[Organising open days where people can see local gardens or allotments managed with wildlife in mind would be a really good way of promoting the Forum's message locally. Have any of you readers taken part in similar projects – we would like to hear from you. Ed.]

More from Anna Williams - Just for fun



Here is a willow dome/tunnel (before and after)I did last week at a school for children with disabilities in Caernarfon, Gwynedd.

Very satisfying, the man in the wheelchair was *sooo excited* when he came into it. He will be even more excited once he sees the leaves growing!!

Froglife's North Lanarkshire Living Water hits the ground hopping!



Following its success in London and Glasgow, the Living Water Project has leapt into North Lanarkshire to continue Froglife's important work creating and restoring ponds in the UK.

The Glasgow project has created numerous ponds across the city, including the one in the photo at Provan Hall Marsh.

The Living Water Project is just one of the ways that Froglife is helping to combat the decline of ponds and amphibians in the UK. With an emphasis on community involvement, it is hoped that this project will kick start local communities to care for ponds and green spaces, providing habitats for amphibians and reptiles long into the future.

“This has been an exciting start for North Lanarkshire Living Water,” says Eilidh Spence, Glasgow Living Water Project Officer. “We hope that by replicating the success of the London and Glasgow projects, we will encourage other local councils to get on board and continue to roll out the project across the UK.”

New recruit Liam Atherton is buzzing about his role as North Lanarkshire Living Water Field Worker. “With more pond creation planned for the coming months, there will be plenty of opportunities for willing volunteers to get their hands dirty! We will also shortly be looking for people to get involved in amphibian and reptile surveys,” added Liam.

All upcoming events are advertised on Froglife's website which is updated regularly – you can see what's on at www.froglife.org/events Alternatively, if you want to find out a bit more, or register your interest, you can email liam.atherton@froglife.org.

Bid on Bagpuss artwork in Froglife auction on 2nd April!

Bagpuss creator Peter Firmin has donated an original watercolour featuring the pink stripy cat and Gabriel the Toad for our *Evening at Toad Hall* auction. Peter received a “Newt Year Honour” (www.froglife.org/newtyearhonours/2011-volunteers.htm) for his creation of the handsome toad character, and in a charming thank you letter offered support for the gala; he also shared stories about Gabriel's creation and his experiences with amphibians in his own pond.

You can join us to bid for this or other great auction items by joining Froglife for *An Evening at Toad Hall* on 2nd April.

Tickets start at £20 and can be booked via www.froglife.org/tuppence/gala.htm, by calling the office on 01733 558844 or by emailing tina.lindsay@froglife.org

Introduction to the Cottage Garden Society by Julia Boulton



Cottage gardening has developed over the years but retains its original intention of sustainability and diversity in the garden. The original cottage gardener had a small plot of land on which to grow food to support his family. Every inch of land had to be used for simple and trusted varieties of fruit, vegetables and herbs. Space was also allocated to flowers, to attract bees and butterflies and other insects to pollinate their precious plants. These simple and hardy plants became known as cottage garden plants. Growing edible crops was the main objective for the cottage gardener and flowers were merely used to lure pollinators into the garden. Nowadays with the increasing necessity to grow our own food, and worrying reports of the decline in our bee population, we would be wise to devote at least a part of our land to this method of gardening.

In Victorian times, gardeners were inspired by the writing of William Robinson (author of 'The English Flower Garden', 1883); and the cottage garden designs of Gertrude Jekyll ('Colour Schemes for the Flower Garden', 1919). Food production was of less importance to the new middle gardens and their small plots were filled with flowers instead. Inspired by Jekyll, they began to group their plants by colour, height and flowering season. Today this method of gardening continues to be promoted and progressed by the Cottage Garden Society.

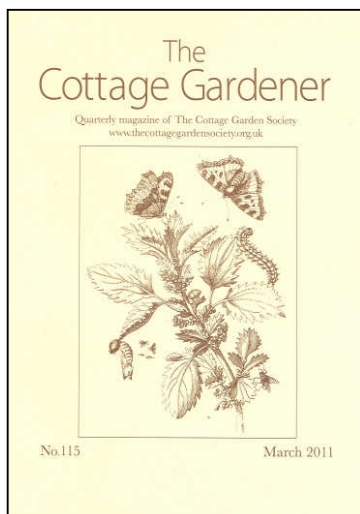


With a membership of around 5,000 worldwide, we are an informal and friendly bunch of both amateur and professional gardeners, sharing an enthusiasm for plants and flowers. We have a quarterly magazine and an annual seed exchange. Local groups organise visits to gardens, exchange cuttings and best of all,

learn from each other's gardening knowledge and experiences.

Some of our members enjoy creating fabulous stands at the flower shows and often achieve medals for their hard work. Catch them every year at the shows at Malvern, Cardiff, Gateshead, Tatton, and Gardeners' World Live and you can get friendly advice from the enthusiastic members staffing the stands there.

Cottage gardening is not all about old-fashioned varieties, although the CGS, formed in 1982, has been instrumental in protecting some of our disappearing flora and continues to do so. We embrace new introductions that have exciting colours, better disease resistance or that can cope with the increasing challenges of climate change, but we are not so fond of modern hybrids that produce no pollen for visiting insects - gardening for wildlife remains high on our agenda. We extol the virtues of a traditional garden style, but enjoy looking at new ways and new ideas too.



If your organisation would like to contribute an article to our quarterly publication, or exchange web links, please contact me through www.thecottagegardensociety.org.uk, or at the address below.

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New Green Roof Code

The January issue of the RHS's The Garden Magazine brought my attention to the release of a new code for construction of "green roofs". This was put together by the Green Roof Organisation (GRO) assisted by the National Federation of Roofing Contractors. You can find the code at www.nfrc.co.uk/upload/GRO_CODE_2011.pdf

The new code is based in part on the German FLL (Forschungsgesellschaft Landschaftsentwicklung Landschaftsbau's (Landscape Research, Development and Construction Society)), *Guidelines for the planning, execution and upkeep of green roof sites*, which is a sound base from which to establish a minimum recommendation for green roof specification, installation and maintenance in the UK.



Laban Dance Centre roof, London created by Forum member Buglife with Living Roofs

The Code recognises four distinct types of green roof, including the new category of "Biodiverse roof" designed specifically to create a habitat that will attract a particular flora and fauna; whether replicating the original footprint

of the building or enhancing the previous habitat. This category includes a brown roof, which is a non-vegetated version. The growing medium is purposely-selected to allow indigenous plant species to inhabit the roof over time. Such roofs can

contribute very substantially to urban biodiversity – one green roof studied in Basel supported 79 beetle and 40 spider species, 20 of which were Red Data Book rarities.

The new code provides comprehensive standards and guidance for the safe and effective creation and maintenance of green roofs, and should help increase their acceptance and use throughout the UK.

Wildlife Houses Credibility Slump Shock Horror

The Which? Gardening edition of November 2010 carried a short piece testing wildlife homes, with resident expert Ken Thompson, Trustee of the Forum doing the testing. As anyone who has read Ken's excellent book "No Nettles Required" will not be surprised to know, NONE of the various bumblebee, lacewing, hedgehog, butterfly and ladybird houses available from retailers proved to work as hoped.

The Best Buy was a home-made Solitary Bee home costing nothing. It consists of a block of untreated softwood measuring approx 50mm x 100mm x 200mm, drilled with 10mm, 8mm, 6mm and 4mm in diameter holes, and hung up with string.

Appeal for your Help Do any Forum members know of any commercial wildlife house (except bird boxes and solitary bee houses) that has EVER worked ANYWHERE under ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, sufficiently well to be worth recommending to a friend. All responses.(preferably with photographic evidence), gratefully received.

And Finally

On native vs non-native plants

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.

"Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them." *Eeyore, A. A. Milne*

"I love little children too but I don't cut off their heads and stick them in vases."

George Bernard Shaw on flowers

On garden sustainability

"A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken." *James Dent*

On planning and development

"OUT-OF-DOORS, n. That part of one's environment upon which no government has been able to collect taxes. Chiefly useful to inspire poets." *Ambrose Bierce*

"Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, and then names the streets after them." *Bill Vaughan*

Please send all Wildlife Gardening news, stories, queries and events to Steve Head at wlgf@stephenmhead.com for inclusion in the Newsletter.